

Supplementary File 1: Women for Women International's 12-Month Social and Economic Empowerment Program

Intervention Design and Content

WfWI has been implementing its 12-month economic and social empowerment program in Afghanistan since 2002. The 2016 program design consisted of: (1) classroom-based training on social and economic empowerment topics; (2) skill-building in numeracy, basic business skills, and a chosen vocational skill (handicrafts and manufacturing, agriculture, livestock, food processing, or trade and services); (3) resource provision in the form of a monthly cash stipend (USD \$10), formal and informal mechanisms to save money (e.g. self-help groups, microfinance institutions), and referrals to health, legal, and financial services; and (4) connections to local women's networks and global supporters, and to women in the communities through development of safe spaces for women to learn and share together.

The classroom training is designed for a population with little educational exposure and low literacy rates: facilitators use graphics, role play, group work, discussions and case studies to deliver content. Social empowerment training modules include: the value of women's work, health and well-being, women's rights, violence against women, family and community decision-making, civic action and advocacy, and social networks and safety nets. Economic empowerment training modules include: business basics, ways to save money (eg savings groups), ways to earn income and improve income-generating activities, and group business and cooperative basics.

Over 12 months, participants are involved in 90 to 180 minutes of programming weekly, delivered to groups of 25 women. The training program is sequenced as follows: weekly numeracy classes for the first three months (12 sessions), twice-monthly business skills training for months four to twelve (16 sessions), weekly vocational skills training for months four to twelve (up to 36 sessions) and twice-monthly social empowerment training for all 12 months (24 sessions).

Procedures

WfWI recruited communities and participants into the study through their standard community assessment and participant identification procedures. Eligible women were enrolled, randomized into the intervention or control study arm, then interviewed with the baseline survey tool. Once the research team had completed the baseline data collection collection, WfWI staff clustered women into groups of 25 and started the first session of the empowerment training program.

Intervention Team

WfWI trainers delivered the intervention. There are social empowerment trainers, economic empowerment trainers, and vocational skill trainers, many of whom have been working with WfWI for an average of 4 to 7 years. Most of the trainers are hired from the communities or neighboring communities that the women come from, 25 to 45 years old, and married. Trainers are all women, must have graduated from class 12, and have teaching experience, preferably experience with adult education. Vocational trainers must have practical work experience and specialized training or university degree in their field of teaching.

Trainers are supervised by the Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, and Monitoring and Evaluation Managers and Officers. Trainers are visited an average of twice a month by

supervisory staff. Trainers complete two five-day training per year which serve as refreshers of current content and introduction of new curriculum topics.

Location of Intervention

The training sessions were delivered in community centers (e.g. women's social centers, schools, women's gardens, or rented homes).

Timing of Intervention

The intervention is twelve months in total. Participants in the intervention arm started the program in three waves: October 2016 (n = 278), November 2016 (n = 200), and March 2017 (n = 269).

Tailoring, modification and fidelity

The basic structure of the WfWI 12-month social and economic empowerment program is fixed, but participant groups select a vocational training track based on interest, skill and market demand. Participants additionally can choose to participate in the self-help groups set up to support group-based savings. Participants bring their own daily realities and community contexts into discussions, dramas, and role plays. In one community, WfWI also conducted men's engagement programming with community and religious leaders and general male community members.

Though the program takes place in conflict-affected locations with high risks of security incidents, the intervention timeline was kept. There was some flexibility around Ramadan and public holidays but compensatory classes were held.